DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 351 182 RC 018 864

AUTHOR McCue, Gerald
TITLE Where Did They Go? Northern Territory 1989 School Leaver Destinations. [Report 4/1991.]
INSTITUTION Northern Territory Dept. of Education, Darwin (Australia).
SPONS AGENCY Australian Dept. of Labour and Administrative Services.
REPORT NO ISBN-0-7245-2575-0
PUB DATE 91
NOTE 44p.; Report presented at the Meeting of the Rural Education Research Association (Alice Springs, Northern Territory, Australia, February, 1992). For the 1898 study, see RC 018 862.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Education Work Relationship; *Employment; Employment Opportunities; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; *High School Graduates; High Schools; *High School Students; Postsecondary Education; Rural Education; *Rural Schools; Sex Differences; Surveys; *Urban Schools
IDENTIFIERS Aboriginal People; *Aboriginal Schools (Australia); *Australia (Northern Territory)

ABSTRACT

This report presents a survey of students 15 years or older who left Northern Territory (Australia) urban and Aboriginal secondary schools during 1989. Telephone surveys were conducted with participants and mail questionnaires were used when telephone contact was not possible. Of the 1,971 students in grades 10, 11, and 12 who left urban and Aboriginal schools during or at the end of the 1989 school year, 62 percent were located to participate in the study. Results of the study suggest: (1) few females went on to higher education; (2) a high number of students resumed their education in other states in Australia; (3) 69 percent of school leavers moved into a destination of their choice; (4) students cited reasons associated with school progress and dissatisfaction with school as their reason for leaving; (5) females were represented most in the clerical and salesperson/personal service worker categories and males were represented most in the laborers and apprenticeship classifications; and (6) more students reported having left school to take up an apprenticeship course than for any other reason. Response from rural Aboriginal schools was low (only 49 school leavers responded) and 29 percent did not state a reason for leaving school and 27 percent gave completion of post-primary education as their reason. None of the respondents went on to any form of higher education or training. A large number of Aboriginal students reported that they did not find work after leaving school. (LP)

RC018864

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Where Did They Go?

NORTHERN TERRITORY

1989

SCHOOL LEAVER

DESTINATIONS

Northern Territory Department of Education
Darwin 1991

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ISBN 0 7245 2575 0

For further information please contact:
Curriculum and Assessment Division
GPO Box 4821
Darwin NT 0801
Telephone: (089) 89 5611

Printed by the Educational Resources Section
of the Northern Territory Department of Education
P&P91/1190–100

Stores Stock Number – 810-0226

This study was undertaken as a joint venture between the Northern Territory Department of Education and the Department of Labour and Administrative Services.

Acknowledgment is given to the assistance of schools which supplied information, individuals who answered questionnaires, Department of Labour and Administrative Services Research and Development Branch officers who gave advice and technical expertise and to the NT Department of Education's Information Systems Section and Curriculum and Assessment Division. Information supplied by the Australian Bureau of Statistics has also been used in compiling this report.

Project Team
Research: Gerald McCue
A research project conducted for the Department of Labour and Administrative Services by the Northern Territory Department of Education, May 1991.

Where did they go? : Northern Territory 1989 school leaver destinations. Darwin : Northern Territory Dept. of Education, 1991.
v, 37 p. ; 30 cm. (Research and evaluation report ; 4/1991.)
ISBN 0724525750 : CIP
1. High school graduates — Employment — Northern Territory. 2. Youth — Northern Territory. 3. School leavers — Northern Territory. I. McCue, Gerald. II. Northern Territory. Curriculum and Assessment Division. III. Series: Research and evaluation report (Northern Territory. Curriculum and Assessment Division) ; 4/1991.
373.18 20

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AIMS OF THE STUDY

The aims of the study were to:

- identify all Northern Territory students in Years 10, 11 and 12, of school leaving age, who left school and did not return to the NT secondary school system
- locate and interview as many of the above group as was practically possible
- identify and record the reasons some of these school leavers chose to leave school rather than complete their studies to the end of Year 12
- identify and record the destinations the school leavers entered and the reasons they had for entering each destination
- describe the patterns of gender distribution in the destinations entered by the school leavers
- produce a report to help guide Government policy in relation to education, training and employment and to allow comparison with similar studies conducted within the Northern Territory and other states.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

During the 1989 school year over 2000 students of school leaving age permanently left the NT secondary school system, opting for a wide range of destinations. It was the purpose of this study to describe aspects of the school-to-work transition such as why students left school, which destinations they entered and why they entered these destinations. Such a report was seen as being of assistance to Government and other bodies in development of policies related to education, employment and training.

Given the unique structure of the Northern Territory economy and workforce, this study would allow comparison with trends in other Australian states and territories and determine how any differences might impact on education, training and employment in the NT. Useful comparisons could also be made with earlier and future school leaver studies conducted in the Northern Territory.

METHODOLOGY

Background

Due to the personal responses required in some areas of this study (such as why a person chose to leave school and why school leavers entered certain areas) it was necessary to personally contact as many of the 1989 school leavers as possible. The preferred and most efficient method of contact was by telephone. A mail questionnaire was then attempted when telephone contact was not possible. Failing these two methods, Department of Education and Department of Labour and Administrative Services' records sometimes supplied the information required.

For the purposes of this study a school leaver was defined as a person of school-leaving age (15 years) who had left the NT secondary school system and had not returned to that system. A significant number of students had, in 1988, indicated their intention to return to school in 1989 but failed to take their place in 1989. These were deemed to be 1988 school leavers as their last day of school was in 1988.

Information Sources

Information was gathered from three separate sources.

CBASS Schools

From the Department of Education's CBASS (Computer Based Administrative System for Schools) network the following information was derived for each 1989 school leaver

- name
- date of birth
- gender
- date of leaving school
- year level at leaving school
- postal address
- telephone number
- destination (only stated in a small percentage of cases).

The schools linked to this network which were able to supply the above information were as follows:

Alice Springs High School
Casuarina Secondary College
Dripstone High School
Jabiru Area School
Nhulunbuy High School
Sadadeen High School
Taminmin High School
Anzac Hill High School
Darwin High School
Driver High School
Katherine High School
Nightcliff High School
Sanderson High School
Tennant Creek High School

- *Non-CBASS Urban Schools*

  These were predominantly the non-Government schools which were not on the Education Department's CBASS network. Each of these schools was contacted and asked to provide a list of its school leavers with as many details relevant to the study as possible. Each of these lists varied in its degree of completeness with some schools supplying the same information as CBASS and others supplying name and community only. The secondary schools in this category, not mentioned below, reported no school leavers.

  O'Loughlin Catholic College
  Marrara Christian School
  St Philip's College, Alice Springs
  NT Secondary Correspondence School
  St John's College
  Catholic High School, Alice Springs
  Batchelor Area School

- *Aboriginal Schools*

  All Aboriginal schools with post-primary students were contacted by telephone (except Lajamanu due to lack of radio contact) regarding the study and agreed to assist, where possible, with the identification of school leavers and the distribution, completion and return of the questionnaires. Some questionnaires were completed over the telephone.

  Although Kormilda and Yirara Colleges are located in urban areas, the vast majority of their leavers were from rural communities and it was through these communities that attempts to contact the school leavers were made. Lists of school leavers from Kormilda and Yirara Colleges supplied the leaver's name and community. In cases where the community had an Education Department school, post-primary or otherwise, the community school was asked to assist with the distribution, completion and return of the questionnaires.

Telephone Questionnaires

Telephone surveys were conducted over the period November 1990 to February 1991 and 1148 of participants in the survey were contacted in this way. Where the school leaver was not available, a family member supplied the information. With very few exceptions people were totally cooperative and this was the most efficient and accurate method of contacting school leavers.

Mail Questionnaires

Given the traditionally low level of response to mail questionnaires this method was used only when telephone contact was not possible. Mail questionnaires were sent only in the following circumstances:

- when no telephone number was supplied
- in cases where the telephone remained unanswered after attempts on two separate occasions.

TABLE 1 MAIL QUESTIONNAIRES OF 1989 SCHOOL LEAVERS

OUTCOME	NUMBER	%
Returned to sender	82	16
Completed and returned	86	17
No response	349	67
Total number sent	**517**	**100**

Other Methods of Gaining School Leaver Information

Where the above two methods failed to establish contact, other sources were available for determining school leaver destinations such as: CBASS records (these were especially helpful in ascertaining whether leavers had gone interstate); Department of Education's lists of scholarship holders and exchangees, and Department of Labour and Administrative Services' records of apprentices, trainees, cadets and scholarship holders.

In the case of school leavers with less common names who could not be readily located, their addresses and/or telephone numbers were sometimes available in the electoral roll or the Northern Territory telephone book.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Locating the 1989 School Leavers

Locating the 1989 school leavers proved to be a major problem. With interviews not being commenced until October 1990 a large number of the 1989 school leavers were difficult or impossible to trace. The historically transient nature of the Northern Territory's population meant that a significant percentage of the school leavers would have left the NT since leaving school or this would have been the reason for them leaving school. This reason for leaving school has been reported where possible.

TABLE 2 AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS' FIGURES FOR PERMANENT INTERSTATE AND OVERSEAS DEPARTURES BY LONG-TERM RESIDENTS

Interstate departures 1989	
March quarter	5800
June quarter	4983
September quarter	4496
December quarter	3868
Interstate departures 1990	
March quarter	5759
June quarter	4233
Overseas departures 1989	656
Total	**29795**

If the as yet unpublished 1990 September quarter interstate departures figure, 1990 overseas departures and the relative immobility of the rural Aboriginal population are also taken into account, it becomes apparent that a very significant proportion of the NT's 1989 urban population had left the NT before the survey commenced.

The large numbers of people who had left the NT permanently since the start of 1989 would seem to suggest that interstate (and to a lesser extent overseas) constituted a major if not the largest single destination of the NT's school leavers.

Job Mobility

Part of the brief of the research officer was to record the destinations of school leavers. In some cases the school leaver had been out of school for up to twenty-two months or at the very least nine months which often allowed ample time for job mobility to become apparent. One school leaver reported having held eight jobs whilst some interviewees had been unemployed since leaving school during 1989.

For ease of analysis the first destination on leaving school was recorded on the database along with the current destination and the number of destinations since leaving school.

Telephone Interviews

The sheer volume of telephone calls required presented a problem in the time sense. To compound this it often required two calls to find the school leaver at home. Instances of the telephone having been disconnected by Telecom exceeded 200. Telecom said the prime reason for a telephone disconnection was the residents having left the address.

Mail Questionnaires

As may have been expected the response to the mail campaign was low; only 17% of questionnaires were completed and returned (see Table 1). Many addresses given by the school leavers were no longer valid as evidenced by the fact that 16% of questionnaires were returned to the research officer as the school leaver was no longer known at that address.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE 1989 URBAN SCHOOL LEAVERS

Numbers of Leavers

According to all figures received, during or at the end of the 1989 school year 1971 students left from the NT's urban schools. These were students in Years 10, 11 and 12 of school-leaving age (fifteen) who did not return to the secondary school system in the NT at least up to the time the survey was conducted.

TABLE 3 NUMBER OF LEAVERS FROM DARWIN SCHOOLS 1989 (by school & gender)

GEN	CA	DR	DH	DV	TN	NC	SN	SJ	MC	OL	TOT
M	294	26	193	52	19	29	21	65	13	1	713
F	331	23	162	47	21	24	22	73	20	1	724
TOT	625	49	355	99	40	53	43	138	33	2	1437

Casuarina	CA	O'Loughlin College	OL	Darwin	DH
Dripstone	DR	Marrara Christian	MC	Taminmin	TN
Nightcliff	NC	St. John's College	SJ	Sanderson	SN
Driver	DV				

Casuarina Secondary College, Darwin's only senior college, supplied by far the largest number of school leavers.

TABLE 4 NUMBER OF LEAVERS FROM OTHER URBAN SCHOOLS 1989 (by school & gender)

GEN	AS	AZ	JA	NH	SD	KA	TC	NT	SP	CH	BA	TOT
M	22	15	1	35	105	47	19	?	1	2	2	249
F	26	4	4	29	111	63	21	?	0	1	0	259
TOT	48	19	5	64	2 5	110	40	26	1	3	2	534

Alice Springs	AS	Tennant Creek	TC	Nhulunbuy	NH
Anzac	AZ	St Phillip's (Alice)	SP	Batchelor	BA
Jabiru	JA	NT Correspondence	NT	Katherine	KA
Sadadeen	SD	Catholic High (Alice)	CH		

Alyangula Area School reported no school leavers. The Northern Territory Secondary Correspondence School (NTSCS) did not supply the gender of their school leavers. Of the other urban schools, Sadadeen Secondary College, Alice Spring's only senior college, supplied the most school leavers.

In all, 1971 students left the NT's urban schools in 1989; 962 were males and 983 females. Twenty-six school leavers from the NTSCS were of unknown gender.

Kormilda and Yirara Colleges

Kormilda College had a very high turnover in that the number of leavers far exceeded its usual enrolment. The above two colleges were able to supply the school leaver's community of origin; the overwhelming majority of these were Aboriginal communities. It was not quantified but the colleges felt that most of their leavers returned to their communities. For this reason Kormilda and Yirara leavers were not included as urban school leavers. It was not ascertainable without a school leavers' questionnaire being completed, whether these students resumed their secondary education in their communities, joined the workforce or otherwise.

TABLE 5 LEAVERS FROM KORMILDA AND YIRARA COLLEGES 1989

Gen	Kormilda	Yirara	Total
M	159	13	172
F	176	15	191
Total	335	28	363

NT Secondary Correspondence School

This school reported thirty-nine students of school leaving age having left in 1989. Of this number five enrolled in other NT schools and two enrolled in interstate schools. Six of the leavers were overseas exchange students. As names and addresses were not supplied it was not possible to contact these school leavers to determine destinations.

Months in Which 1989 Urban Students Left School

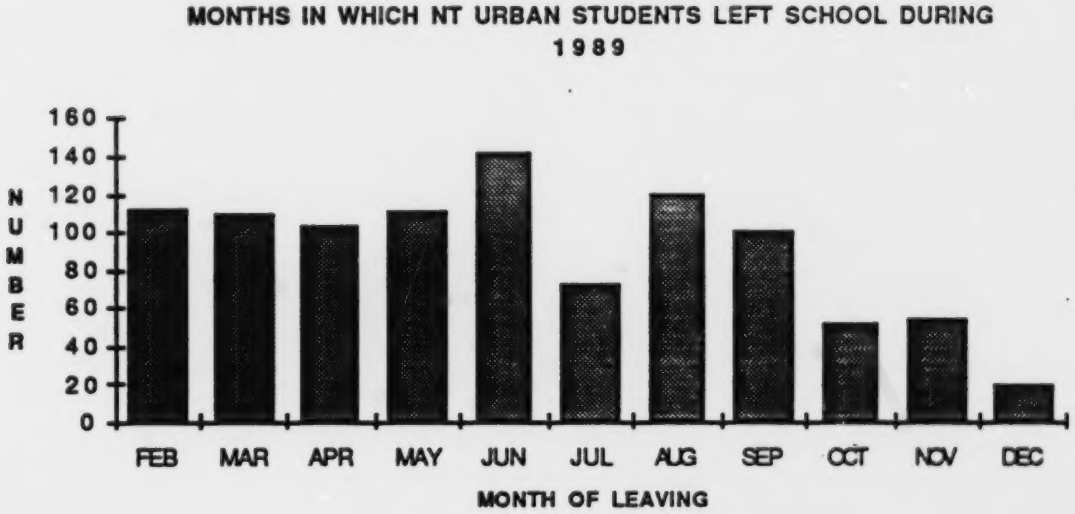
The following figures apply only to leavers from schools which supplied the dates on which the students left, such as the CBASS schools and St John's College.

TABLE 6 **MONTHS IN WHICH STUDENTS LEFT URBAN SCHOOLS 1989**

FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC*	TOT
116	109	103	110	141	71	120	100	51	53	19	993

*December's figures include only those students who left during the month of December before the end of the school year.

FIGURE 1



Except for June and the end of Semester 1, when numbers of school leavers increased slightly and the July semester break when numbers decreased, no real pattern emerged until October, November and December, when lower numbers of students left school than in the preceding months.

It would seem that if students reached the third term break, they were much less likely to leave before the end of the school year.

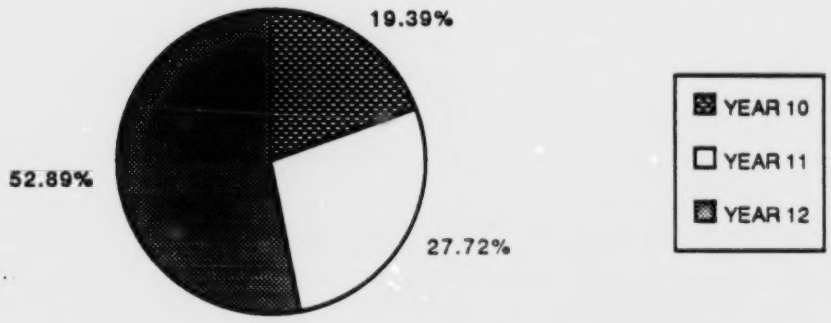
Of the 1861 urban school leavers whose date of leaving was supplied, 974 (52%) completed the school year, 887 (48%) left school during the year.

Year Levels at Leaving

The majority of the NT's school leavers had achieved the level of Year 12, although large numbers left during Years 10 and 11.

FIGURE 2

YEAR LEVEL OF NT URBAN STUDENTS ON LEAVING SCHOOL IN 1989



School Leavers Completing Year 12

Of those students who commenced Year 12 in 1989 a large majority went on to complete this year of study.

TABLE 7 SCHOOL LEAVERS DURING AND AT THE END OF YEAR 12 1989 (by gender)

GEN	DURING YEAR 12	%	END OF YEAR 12	%	TOT
M	153	31	335	69	488
F	147	27	398	73	545
TOT	300		733		1033
%	29		71		100

A marginally higher percentage of female students than male students completed Year 12. Of all the 1989 school leavers whose year level was supplied, 37% left after having completed Year 12.

Surprisingly high numbers of students who were expected back and therefore appeared on the CBASS records for the 1989 school year, did not take their place at school in that year. In all, 557 students fell into this category. Students in this category were those whose 'left date', according to CBASS, was on or about the first day of the 1989 school year.

Despite using CBASS and other school records of telephone numbers and addresses, electoral rolls, the telephone directory, Department of Education and Department of Labour and Administrative Services' records, the research officer could not locate and interview 776 of the 1989 school leavers. As previously indicated it is considered that a high percentage of these had left the Territory. In all, 62% of NT urban school leavers were located.

REASONS FOR LEAVING SCHOOL

During 1989, 1138 students left school prior to the end of Year 12. Except for those students who completed Year 12 and therefore left because they had completed their secondary schooling (see Table 7), all school leavers interviewed were asked why they had left school rather than completing their studies. Although the interviewees were able to give more than one reason if they so wished, most gave one reason only or gave reasons that generally fell into the same category. For this reason, one response was recorded in each case. In the few instances where responses fell across two or more categories, the response category into which the number one reason for leaving fell, was recorded.

Following a review of the literature on reasons for leaving school and a pilot study, the following reasons for leaving school were offered as options. Codes used for the following figures and tables are supplied with the categories and possible responses.

CATEGORY	POSSIBLE RESPONSE(S)	CODE
Financial	My parents couldn't afford to keep me at school I wanted to earn my own money	A
School progress	I didn't think I had the ability to keep studying My results weren't good enough	B
Dissatisfaction with school	I felt school was irrelevant to me I was sick of school in general	C
Employment	To take up a job that became available	D
Apprenticeship/ Traineeship/ Course	To take up an apprenticeship/traineeship/ course that became available	E
Left the NT	Left the NT to go interstate or overseas	F
Boarding school or secondary studies l/state	Left the NT to continue secondary school studies either at a boarding school or a secondary school	G
Other	Reasons other than above. See explanation below	H

In the OTHER category above a variety of reasons were offered such as illness, injury, pregnancy, marriage, peer pressure, dissatisfaction with courses on offer, death and less substantially, 'don't know'. More than one interviewee responded 'I'm still not sure' or 'I wish I hadn't; silly wasn't it'.

In telephone conversations with school leavers it was interesting to note the high numbers who, even after being out of school for only a relatively short time, saw their actions in leaving school as ill-conceived and having been born out of a now recognised lack of maturity. Many of these discussed the prospects of returning to school or improving their educational status by other means. The researcher felt it would be interesting to plot the degrees of success such 'premature' school leavers enjoyed in their proposed educational endeavours.

TABLE 8 REASONS GIVEN BY 1989 URBAN STUDENTS FOR LEAVING SCHOOL

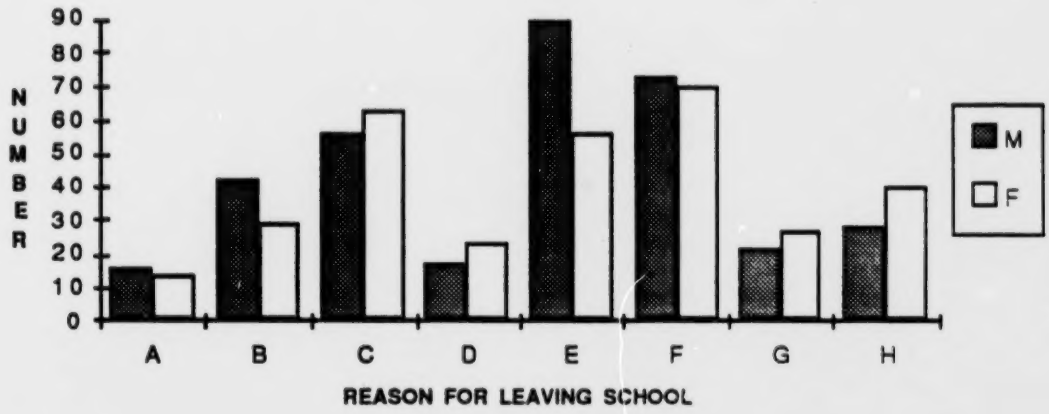
REASON FOR LEAVING CATEGORY	TOT	%
A: Financial	29	4
B: School progress	71	11
C: Dissatisfaction with school	119	18
D: Employment	40	6
E: Apprenticeship/Traineeship/Course	146	22
F: Left the NT	143	21
G: Boarding/secondary school interstate	49	7
H: Other	72	11
TOTAL	669	100

It would seem reasonable to assume that Category F would be an underestimation of some magnitude as the reason such a large number of the 1989 school leavers could not be contacted was that they had left the NT (see table 2).

Of those school leavers who remained in the NT there would appear to be two broad reasons for leaving school. On the negative side existed the 'school-based' reasons of poor academic progress and dissatisfaction with school, and on the more positive side, leaving to take up employment or further training/education. Gender differences did occur in some of the reason for leaving school categories. See figure 3 .

FIGURE 3

REASONS GIVEN BY NT 1989 URBAN STUDENTS FOR LEAVING SCHOOL (by gender)



A greater proportion of males than females seemed to be prepared to leave school for reasons associated with school progress. With category F the higher proportion of males was in large part due to the disproportionate number of males who gain apprenticeships.

TABLE 9 REASONS GIVEN BY 1989 URBAN STUDENTS FOR LEAVING SCHOOL (by year level at leaving school)

YEAR	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	TOT
10	7	12	23	2	34	64	26	13	181
%	4	7	13	1	19	35	14	7	100
11	11	33	56	20	74	41	17	34	286
%	4	11	20	7	26	14	6	12	100
12	11	26	40	18	38	38	6	25	202
%	5	13	20	9	19	19	3	12	100
TOT	29	71	119	40	146	143	49	72	669

Year 11 appeared to be the time a student was most likely to leave to take up an apprenticeship, traineeship or course or for reasons associated with dissatisfaction with school. Year 10 seemed to be the stage when students were most likely to leave the NT or to further their studies at an interstate boarding or secondary school.

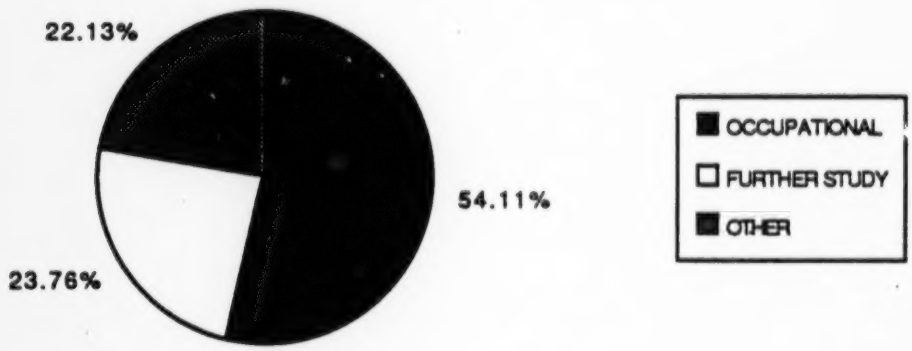
OVERALL DESTINATIONS OF 1989 NT URBAN SCHOOL LEAVERS

For ease of analysis the wide range of destinations reported was divided into three groups:

- **Occupational destinations:** These were occupationally oriented destinations including employment, unemployment (but part of the labour pool), apprenticeships, traineeships and prevocational courses;
- **Further study:** This group included higher education (universities and colleges of advanced education);
- **Other destinations:** These were the neither occupationally nor educationally oriented destinations that included interstate secondary study, interstate/overseas permanent departures, exchange students and social reasons.

FIGURE 4

MAJOR FIRST DESTINATIONS OF 1989 NT URBAN SCHOOL LEAVERS



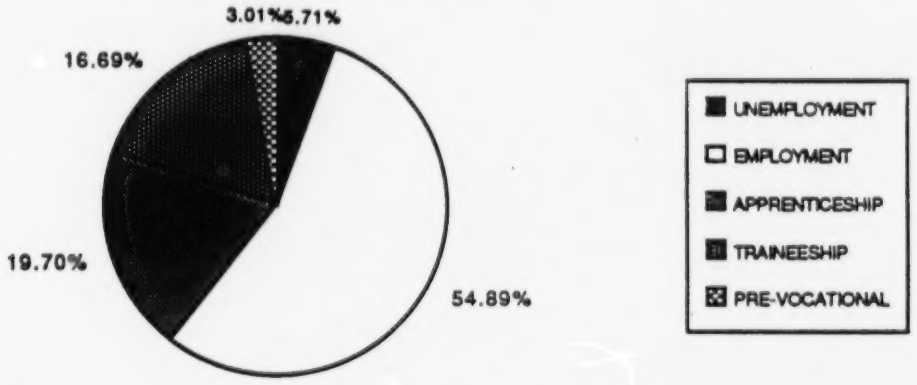
On leaving school the largest number of leavers opted for occupationally oriented destinations. The most recent destinations showed some changes with 57.96% being in the Occupational category and 20.13% engaged in further study. A more detailed account of each category follows.

OCCUPATIONAL DESTINATIONS

Respondents to this survey reported a wide range of destinations; from ballet dancing to 'bouncing' in a nightclub, all destinations were recorded.
As stated earlier, the destination immediately after leaving school, the most recent destination up to the time of interview and the total number of destinations were reported. Only the Occupational and Further Study destinations were tallied in the total number of destinations.

FIGURE 5

MAJOR OCCUPATIONAL DESTINATIONS OF 1989 NT URBAN SCHOOL LEAVERS ON LEAVING SCHOOL



The majority (365) of the Occupational group of 665 moved straight into employment after leaving school. Conversely, a relatively low number of the school leavers reported not being able to find employment at this time. This picture had changed at the time of interview. It should be noted that at the time of the interview the interviewees had been out of school for between ten and twenty-four months.

TABLE 10 **OCCUPATIONAL DESTINATIONS OF 1989 NT URBAN SCHOOL LEAVERS ON LEAVING SCHOOL AND AT TIME OF INTERVIEW**

	FIRST DESTINATION i.e. ON LEAVING SCHOOL	%	THOSE WHO STAYED IN THEIR FIRST DESTINATION	MOST RECENT DESTINATION i.e. AT TIME OF INTERVIEW	%
Employment	365	54	157	368	51
Unemployment	38	6	19	86	12
Apprenticeship	131	20	115	151	21
Traineeship	111	17	78	99	14
Pre-vocation	20	3	9	13	2
Total	665	100	378	717	100

By the time of the interview 12% of the school leavers were unemployed. Six percent had described themselves as unemployed on leaving school. There was a drop in the percentage employed, although the total number employed had barely changed. This was due to the fact that, by the time of the interview, a greater number (717) of the 1989 school leavers described themselves as part of the workforce. A high number of apprentices stayed with their apprenticeships. Thirty-six school leavers managed to gain apprenticeships not immediately on leaving school but after having held a job. This may offer some hope for those who could not gain apprenticeships immediately after leaving school. Less than half of the school leavers who found employment on leaving school remained in their first job. A disturbing factor was the marked increase in unemployment and the nineteen school leavers who had not found any occupational destination at all.

Employment

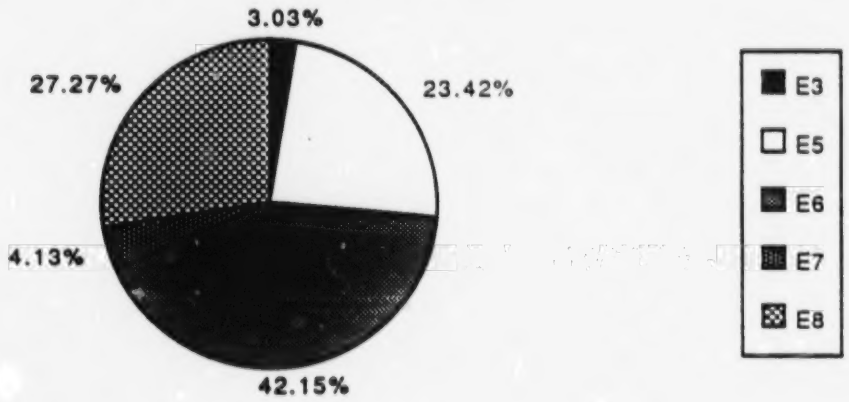
Employment was defined as the job the interviewee saw as his/her major occupation at the time. These occupations were categorised under the Australian Standard Classifications of Occupations (ASCO) as used by the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations and the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

ASCO CLASSIFICATIONS	CODE
Managers and Administrators	E1
Professionals	E2
Para-Professionals	E3
Tradespersons	E4
Clerks	E5
Salespersons and Personal Service Workers	E6
Plant and Machine Operators and Drivers	E7
Labourers and Related Workers	E8

As may have been expected at this early stage of their careers none of the school leavers fell into the E1, E2 or E4 classifications as a first destination.

FIGURE 6

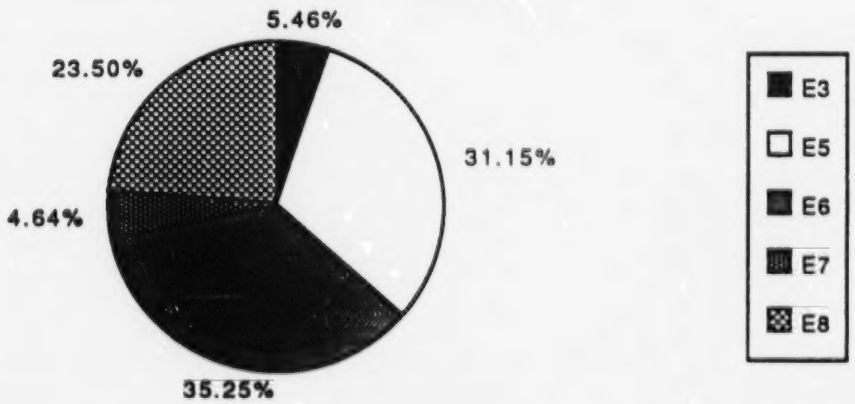
FIRST DESTINATIONS OF 1989 NT URBAN SCHOOL LEAVERS ACCORDING TO ASCO CLASSIFICATIONS



A largely service-based private sector and a relatively large public service in the NT were reflected in the occupational destinations of 1989 school leavers. Few school leavers reported becoming involved in the manufacturing or rural sectors.

FIGURE 7

SECOND DESTINATIONS OF 1989 NT URBAN SCHOOL LEAVERS ACCORDING TO ASCO CLASSIFICATIONS



A higher proportion of the school leaver workforce had become involved in the clerical area (E5) with lower proportions having involved themselves in the labouring/related and sales/personal service (E6 and E8) areas perhaps suggesting that in some cases the aforementioned areas (E6 and E8) were used as 'staging posts' whilst the school leaver moved on to something else.

When gender differences in the numbers of school leavers entering each category as a first destination were looked at, some significant imbalances became apparent.

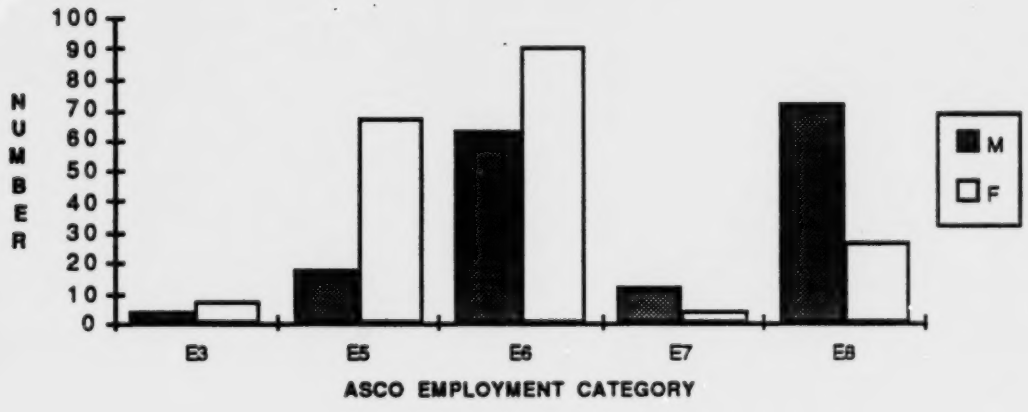
TABLE 11 OCCUPATIONAL DESTINATIONS OF 1989 URBAN SCHOOL LEAVERS ON LEAVING SCHOOL (by gender)

GEN	E3	%	E5	%	E6	%	E7	%	E8	%	TOT
M	3	30	18	21	63	41	12	75	73	73	169
F	7	70	67	79	91	59	4	25	27	27	196
TOT	10		85		154		16		100		365
%	3		23		42		5		27		100

Expressed graphically these gender differences became even more obvious.

FIGURE 8

ASCO EMPLOYMENT GROUPS ENTERED BY 1989 NT URBAN SCHOOL LEAVERS (by gender)



Numerically, females dominate the clerical classification by a factor approaching four. It should be noted that, along with miscellaneous clerks, this classification contains typists, receptionists, data processors and business machine operators (see appendix 1). To a lesser extent, females dominate in the salespersons and personal service workers classifications. In both these classifications as well as the labourers and related workers, historical imbalances were maintained.

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships were categorised under the ACCO Apprenticeship classifications.

ASCO CLASSIFICATION	CODE
Metal Fitting and Machining Tradespersons	A1
Other Metal Tradespersons	A2
Electrical and Electronics Tradespersons	A3
Building Tradespersons	A4
Printing Tradespersons	A5
Vehicle Tradespersons	A6
Food Tradespersons	A7
Amenity Horticultural Tradespersons	A8
Miscellaneous Tradespersons	A9

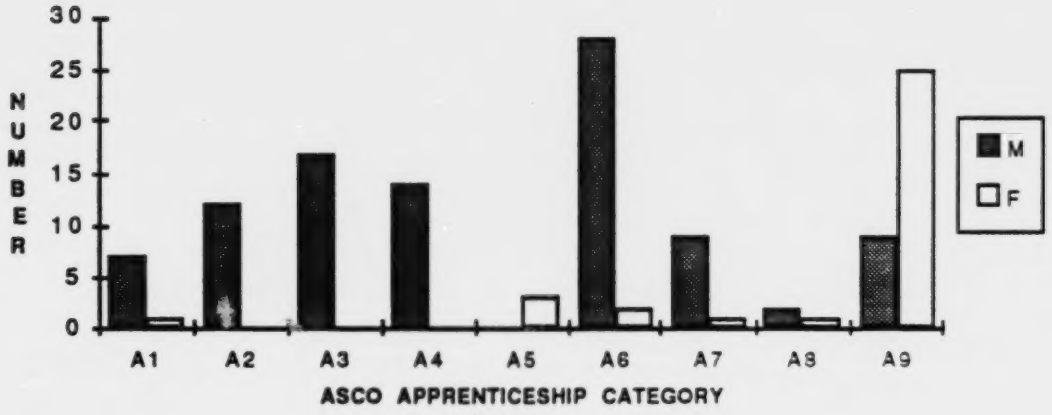
TABLE 12 APPRENTICESHIPS ENTERED BY 1989 URBAN SCHOOL LEAVERS (by gender)

GEN	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8	A9	TOT
M	7	12	17	14	0	28	9	2	9	98
F	1	0	0	0	3	2	1	1	25	33
TOT	8	12	17	14	3	30	10	3	34	131

Probably nowhere else in the survey were gender differences more outstanding than in apprenticeship entries.

FIGURE 9

APPRENTICESHIPS ENTERED BY 1989 NT URBAN SCHOOL LEAVERS (by gender)



Other than the miscellaneous tradespersons (A9) category, the majority of whom were hairdressers, only eight females took on apprenticeships as a first destination.

It appears that once a school leaver gained an apprenticeship he or she tended to stay with it. Of the 131 school leavers who gained apprenticeships on leaving school 116, were at the time of the interview, still in that apprenticeship. Discussions with the school leavers indicated that demand exceeded supply in the apprenticeship market, with many school leavers taking on jobs to support themselves with the goal of gaining an apprenticeship. As previously mentioned thirty-five school leavers found apprenticeships not as a first destination and usually after holding some sort of employment.

Prevocational Courses

Prevocational courses, designed as an introduction to an apprenticeship, were also recorded. Perhaps due to the strong association between prevocational courses and apprenticeships this area was another male bastion. Of the twenty school leavers who reported entering one of these courses as a first destination, nineteen were male. At the time of interview nine school leavers were continuing with the course and six had achieved an apprenticeship. It should be noted that there were more than the 20 entrants to prevocational courses who described themselves as 1989 school leavers. There were not included as the year of leaving supplied by the school was used throughout the report.

Traineeships

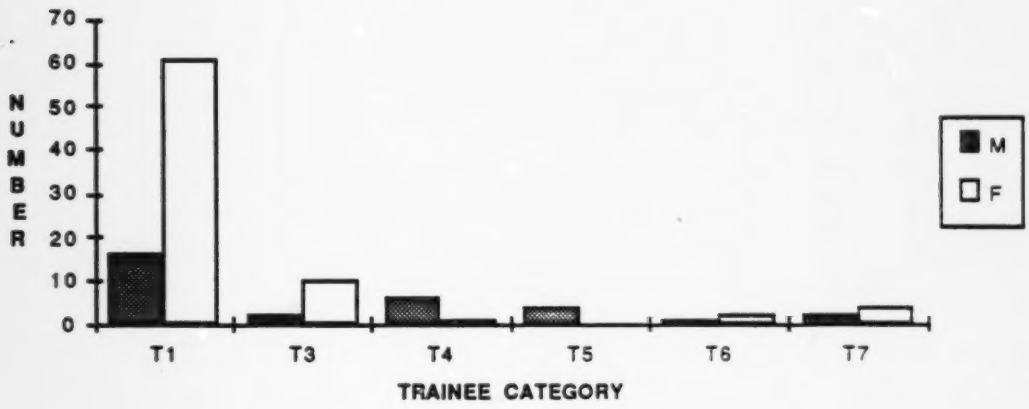
From a list of traineeships supplied by the Department of Labour and Administrative Services the following classifications were developed.

TRAINEESHIP CLASSIFICATION	CODE
Australian Public Service, NT Public Service, Office Clerical	T1
Construction Worker	T2
Hospitality	T3
Retail, Automotive Parts	T4
Furniture Removal/Storage, Transport/Freight Industries	T5
Office Technology/Systems Software	T6
Banking	T7
Clothing and Textiles	T8
Insurance	T9

As none of the school leavers interviewed reported having entered a construction, clothing and textiles or insurance traineeship (T2,T8 or T9) these are not referred to in future graphs or tables. Of the 1989 school leavers, 111 entered traineeships as their first destination.

FIGURE 10

TRAINEESHIPS ENTERED BY 1989 NT URBAN SCHOOL LEAVERS AS A FIRST DESTINATION (by gender)



Clerical traineeships (T1) accounted for seventy-seven (71%) of all traineeships taken on by the 1989 school leavers with females dominating in this area. Of those who completed their clerical traineeships ten had found employment in the clerical area. This accounted for all of those who had completed a clerical traineeship.

At the time of the interview 71% of those who undertook traineeships as a first destination remained in that area. The typical length of a traineeship is one year.

Unemployed

The category of unemployed was applied when the interviewee described his or her situation as having been unemployed, or as currently unemployed but seeking (however diligently) work.

As a first destination thirty-eight, which was 6% of the identified school leavers who fell into one of the 'Occupational' category (see Table 10), school leavers described themselves as unemployed. As the destination at the time of interview this number had increased to eighty-six which accounted for 12 % of the 1989 school leavers in the above mentioned category.

Nineteen of the 1989 school leavers had not found employment since leaving school.

FURTHER STUDY

Higher Education

Higher Education was further broken down into:

- University - those who were studying full time at a university. Whether the student was studying in the NT or interstate was also recorded.

- College of Advanced Education (CAE) - those who were studying full time at an interstate CAE. There are no CAE institutions in the NT.

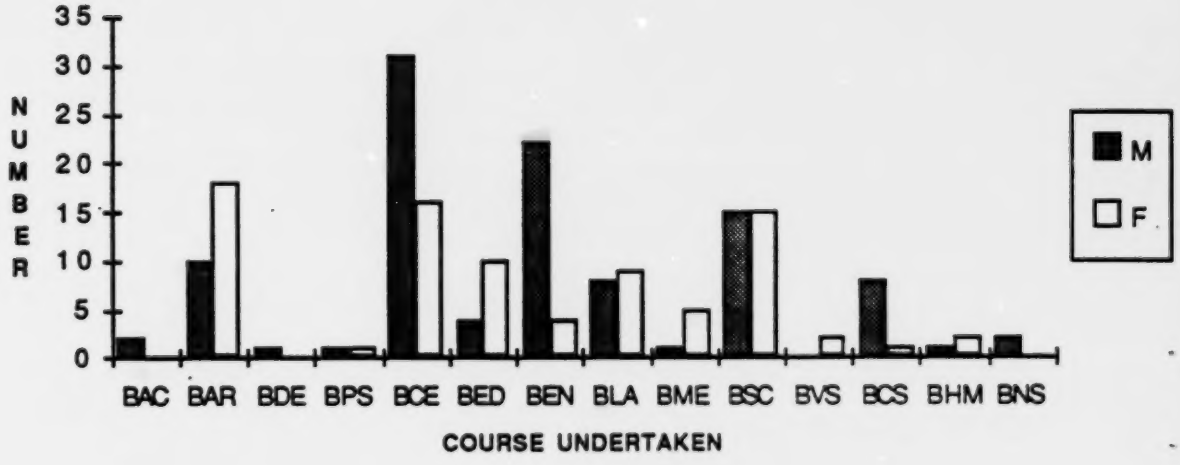
University Courses

The following are the codes used for university courses.

BACHELOR OF	CODE	BACHELOR OF	CODE
Agriculture/Forestry	BAG	Law	BLA
Architecture	BAC	Medicine (and related)	BME
Arts	BAR	Science	BSC
Dentistry	BDE	Veterinary Science	BVS
Economics/Business/Comm.	BCE	Computer Science	BCS
Education	BED	Psychology	BPS
Engineering	BEN	Hospitality Management	BHM
Not Stated	BNS		

FIGURE 11

UNIVERSITY COURSES UNDERTAKEN BY 1989 NT URBAN SCHOOL LEAVERS (by gender)



Even with university courses, marked gender differences occurred. A higher number of males (56%) entered university than females (44%). This difference becomes more exaggerated when the fact that more females (398) than males (335) completed Year 12 (see table 7). Clearly, females outnumbered males in the areas of education and arts, with males outnumbering females in commerce/economics, computer science and especially in engineering.

The only mainstream university area of study where NT school leavers were not represented was that of agriculture, perhaps partly reflecting the relatively minor contribution farming makes to the NT economy.

TABLE 13 UNIVERSITY DEGREES UNDERTAKEN BY 1989 URBAN SCHOOL LEAVERS (by gender and place of study)

DEGREE	PLACE		TOTAL	GENDER		TOTAL
	NT	OTHER		M	F	
BAC	0	2	2	2	0	2
BAR	19	9	28	10	18	28
BDE	0	1	1	1	0	1
BPS	1	1	2	1	1	2
BCE	34	13	47	31	16	47
BED	11	3	14	4	10	14
BEN	10	16	26	22	4	26
BLA	17	0	17	8	9	17
BME	0	6	6	1	5	6
BSC	15	15	30	15	15	30
BVS	0	2	2	0	2	2
BCS	6	3	9	8	1	9
BHM	3	0	3	1	2	3
BNS	0	2	2	2	0	2
TOTAL	116	73	189	106	83	189
%	61	39	100	56	44	100

The BME category included four medical students, an occupational therapist and a physiotherapist. Even though the range of university courses on offer in the NT was somewhat limited, 60% of school leavers elected to stay in the NT for their university studies. Of the 189 school leavers who reported having commenced a university course, 172 were still at university at the time of the interview.

In the longer term the figure of 189 university entrants from the 1989 school leavers would not have been the true figure as thirty-four reported either having deferred a university course until 1991 or expressed their intention of undertaking a university course in 1991 having achieved the required Tertiary Entrance Score.

College of Advanced Education Courses

The following are the codes used for the CAE courses

FIELD OF STUDY	CODE	FIELD OF STUDY	CODE
Applied Science	HAS	Social Science/Humanities	HSS
Visual/Performing Arts	HVP	Health Sciences	HHS
Architecture/Building	HAC	Education	HED
Commerce/Business	HCB		

No NT school leavers reported having undertaken CAE courses in agriculture or engineering.

TABLE 14 COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION COURSES UNDERTAKEN BY 1989 URBAN SCHOOL LEAVERS (by gender)

	HAS	HVP	HAC	HCB	HSS	HHS	HED	TOTAL
M	0	2	2	1	0	1	0	6
F	1	1	0	3	1	5	9	20
TOTAL	1	3	2	4	1	6	9	26
%	4	11	8	15	4	23	35	100

Of the twenty-six school leavers who commenced CAE courses in 1990, twenty-three remained in those courses at the time of interview. Education was the most popular field of CAE study and school leavers entering this field were all females. Females also greatly outnumbered males in the HHS category. All school leavers in this category were studying nursing.

Further Education

For the purposes of this study further education was defined as an award course up to and including the level of Associate Diploma. The vast majority of school leavers who involved themselves in further education did so in the Northern Territory.

FIELD OF STUDY	CODE	FIELD OF STUDY	CODE
Applied Science/Electronics	F1	Art and Design	F2
Building	F3	Business Studies	F4
Engineering	F5	Rural and Horticulture	F6
Music	F7	Paramedical	F8
Industrial Services	F9	Personal Services/Hospitality	F10
General Studies	F11	Private Provider	F12

From the list of further education courses no school leavers chose the industrial services (F9) course.

TABLE 15 FURTHER EDUCATION COURSES UNDERTAKEN BY 1989 URBAN SCHOOL LEAVERS (by gender)

	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8	F10	F11	F12	TOTAL
M	3	5	1	3	0	3	2	1	2	2	2	24
F	1	2	2	24	2	2	1	0	9	2	8	53
TOTAL	4	7	3	27	2	5	3	1	11	4	10	77
%	5	9	4	35	3	7	4	1	14	5	3	100

Female school leavers were more than twice as likely to become involved in further education than males. Business Studies was by far the most popular category for females with word processing being the most commonly studied area in this category.

Given the present and projected high level of importance of tourism and hospitality to the economy of the NT, a surprisingly low number of school leavers became involved in this field through further education. If the three school leavers studying this area at university level were added to the fourteen above, 0.85% of the NT's urban school leavers went on to study in the tourism and hospitality area.

OTHERS

This category included all other destinations excluding employment and further study.

OTHER DESTINATIONS	CODE
Social such as motherhood, fatherhood, married, invalid, deceased, missing	S
Permanently departed the NT for interstate or overseas	I
Exchange Student - either an overseas exchange student returning home or a NT student going on an exchange	E
Interstate to boarding school or secondary school	B

TABLE 16 OTHER DESTINATIONS OF URBAN 1989 SCHOOL LEAVERS

	S	I	E	B	TOTAL
NUMBER	18	175	30	49	272
%	7	64	11	18	100

As previously mentioned, the figure for permanent departures is probably an underestimation. The figure for exchange students includes overseas students returning to their country of origin and NT students taking up an overseas exchange.

In the case of NT students going on exchanges, some did so at the end of their secondary schooling and some intended to resume their secondary studies on their return.

REASONS FOR ENTERING DESTINATIONS

School leavers who entered an occupational destination or went on to further study were asked why they had entered that particular area and their response was recorded. This area of inquiry excluded those who were unemployed and those who fell into the 'Other' category. The following figures apply only to the first destinations of the 1989 school leavers. Interviewees were asked which of the following best applied as a reason for entering their first destination.

REASON FOR ENTERING DESTINATION	CODE
It was what I wanted to do	A
It was the only job I could get	B
I took the job to earn money whilst looking for something else	C
To move into the family business	D
It wasn't the course I had wanted but it was all my educational qualifications would allow	E
Other	F

In this area no significant gender differences were apparent. The figures indicate that the stage at which the student left may have had some bearing on why he or she entered an occupational or educational destination.

TABLE 17 REASONS GIVEN BY 1989 URBAN SCHOOL LEAVERS FOR ENTERING DESTINATIONS (by year level at leaving)

LEFT	A	B	C	D	E	F	TOTAL
YEAR 10	49	8	16	4	0	0	77
%	64	10	21	5	0	0	100
YEAR 11	124	24	57	3	1	1	210
%	59	11	27	2	0.5	0.5	100
DURING YEAR 12	93	15	34	3	0	2	147
%	63	10	23	2	0	2	100
END OF YEAR 12	362	17	78	3	11	14	485
%	75	4	16	1	2	2	100
TOTAL	628	64	185	13	12	17	919
%	69	7	20	1	1	2	100

Students who completed Year 12 were more likely to enter a destination that they wanted to enter and less likely to take the only job that they could get, or take a job as a stop-gap measure whilst looking for something else. Sixty-one per cent of students who did not complete Year 12 moved into a destination of their choice, whereas 75% of those who completed Year 12 fell into this category.

Of all 1989 school leavers an encouragingly high 69% of school leavers moved into a destination that they had wanted to move into.

RURAL ABORIGINAL SCHOOL LEAVERS

The overall response from rural Aboriginal schools' school leavers was not as complete as may have been possible, with just fifty-five Aboriginal school leavers responding. Many of the questionnaires were not as comprehensively completed as may have been hoped. Notwithstanding the time and financial restraints it would seem that a more efficient method of collecting such data would be to visit the relevant rural areas.

Of the fifty-five respondents, six returned to school at some stage of the 1990 school year thus leaving, within the terms of the survey, forty-nine school leavers. There were thought to be in excess of 450 rural Aboriginal school leavers in 1989.

School leavers from both Kormilda and Yirara Colleges are included in this section for the reasons described earlier in the report.

All ABS figures mentioned in this section are derived from the ABS publication *Aboriginal People in the Northern Territory* catalogue number 4107.7.

Reasons For Leaving School

None of the school leavers reported having reached the end of Year 12 although 13 did reach the end of their post-primary education, this being as far as they could possibly go in their secondary education without moving to a larger population centre.

TABLE 18 REASONS GIVEN BY RURAL ABORIGINAL STUDENTS FOR LEAVING SCHOOL 1989

REASON FOR LEAVING CATEGORY	TOTAL	%
A: Financial	3	6
B: School progress	1	2
C: Dissatisfaction with school	8	16
D: Employment	1	2
E: Apprenticeship/Traineeship/Course	1	2
F: Left the NT	0	0
G: Boarding school	2	4
H: Other	6	12
I: Completion of post-primary education	13	27
J: Reason not stated	14	29
TOTAL	49	100

With such a small sample size it is questionable as to whether inferences could be drawn from this table or comparisons made with similar data such as that contained in table 17. Figures in the previously mentioned Australian Bureau of Statistics publication indicating

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the relative immobility of the NT's Aboriginal population would seem to support a low figure for category 'F'. Low rural Aboriginal employment rates described by the ABS would also appear to reflect low figures for categories 'D' and 'E' (see table 20) as would low retention rates suggest high numbers in category 'C'.

Destinations of Rural Aboriginal School Leavers

From the limited sample available unemployment was the dominant destination with involvement in the Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) being the second most common destination on leaving school. With the CDEP scheme, unemployment benefit monies due to community members eligible for this benefit, in accordance with community wishes, are given instead to the community and distributed on the basis of work done towards the development of the community.

TABLE 19 DESTINATIONS OF 1989 RURAL ABORIGINAL SCHOOL LEAVERS

DESTINATION	TOTAL	%
ASCO Employment Category		
3 para-professional	0	0
5 clerks	5	10
6 salespersons and personal service workers	4	8
7 plant and machine operators and drivers	0	0
8 labourers and related workers	2	4
CDEP worker	8	17
Unemployed	15	31
Apprenticeship	0	0
Traineeship	0	0
Higher education	0	0
Further education	0	0
Social	6	12
Boarding school	2	4
Destination not stated	7	14
TOTAL	49	100

A feature of these responses, albeit low in number, is the fact that none of the respondents went on to any form of further education or training. The largest number reported that they did not find work on leaving school.

The following table relates to both rural and urban dwelling Aborigines but it should be noted that ABS figures indicate that urban-dwelling Aborigines as a group tend to be better qualified and have a greater participation rate in the workforce than their rural counterparts.

TABLE 20 LABOUR FORCE STATUS OF 15–19-YEARS-OLD RURAL AND URBAN ABORIGINES

GENDER	EMPLOYED	UNEMPLOYED	NOT IN WORK FORCE	NOT STATED	TOTAL
M	403	330	1066	285	2084
%	19	16	51	14	100
F	283	281	1371	280	2215
%	13	13	62	12	100
TOTAL	686	611	2437	565	4299
%	16	14	57	13	100

Adapted from ABS figures Catalogue 4107.7. Figures from Census 1986.

The term 'not in work force' used in the above table refers to students, discouraged job seekers who have ceased to look for work, homemakers and pensioners.

The age range of 15–19 was selected as it would be the most likely range to contain school leavers.

In the occupational and further educational areas, rural (and to a lesser extent the urban) Aboriginal school leavers had low rates of participation. Fortunately there is some light at the end of the tunnel in the form of various NT and Commonwealth Government initiatives such as the establishment by the NT Government of Community Education Centres in some larger communities to provide post-primary and TAFE education; the Aboriginal Education Programme funded by the Commonwealth where the NT Department of Education is implementing agreed initiatives directed toward the enhancement of education for Aborigines; and the Commonwealth ABSTUDY schemes that provide assistance to Aboriginal students at tertiary and other educational levels.

If the progress of future rural Aboriginal school leavers were to be monitored it would be hoped that some gains would become evident.

CONCLUSIONS

Numerically, gender imbalances were apparent in many of the destinations entered by the 1989 school leavers. In the key areas of higher and further education, apprenticeships, jobs and traineeships, gender imbalances, however unwarranted, were present. Although more females completed Year 12, fewer went on to attend university.

Another area for concern relates to the high numbers of NT secondary students who permanently left the NT and resumed their education in other states of Australia. In the absence of a national curriculum, some disruption must result. As the population of the NT was relatively stable during the period for which the large number of departures were reported, it would be reasonable to assume that the high numbers of students entering the NT schools system would have experienced similar disruptions. To address this issue, the Australian Education Council established a working party on mobility issues whose task it was to describe current positive approaches and suggest extensions to these approaches aimed at minimising the difficulties experienced by students changing school systems. The working party has since published its findings in a series of four booklets available through the Australian Education Council.

Students who completed Year 12 were more likely (75% of Year 12 finishers) to enter a destination of their choice than those who failed to complete Year 12 (61%). Year 12 finishers were also less likely to take the only job that they could get or to take a job as a temporary measure whilst looking for something else. Of all 1989 school leavers 69% moved into a destination of their choice. National figures could not be located to compare to this seemingly high figure.

Of the school leavers contacted, 22% had entered a university or CAE. When the more limited range of higher education courses available in the NT and the greater difficulties involved in attending a distant interstate institution are taken into account, this figure compares well with the latest national figure available of 22% of 1988 school leavers attending higher education.

Very few NT urban students left school for financial reasons. A significant proportion of leavers did so for reasons associated with school progress (11%) and dissatisfaction with school (18%). There is probably potential in schools and also students themselves for improving these figures.

Many leavers in these categories did not seem, at the time, to appreciate the grave step that they had taken and with the benefit of hindsight and limited labour market success were having second thoughts as to the implications of that decision. Many of the 'early' school leavers had expressed their intentions of re-commencing their education at a later, often unspecified, date. It would be interesting to assess, although hard to quantify, how the extensions to the 'user pays' principle for further education impact upon those 1989 school leavers who had wished to further their education.

Female school leavers were very well represented in the clerical and salesperson/personal service worker categories with 74% of the female school leaver workforce, which compares

to the national figure of 75% supplied by the Department of Employment, Education and Training. The high male leaver representation in the labourers and related workers and apprenticeships classifications was also reflected in the national figures. The 11% of male leavers who entered the clerical area compared to the national average of 12.6%, females at 41% exceeded the national figure of 32.2%. In the area of sales/personal services NT school leavers did not follow the national employment trends. With NT male school leavers, 24% entered this area as opposed to 13.6% nationally, 33% of NT females as opposed to 43.1% nationally.

When the first occupations on leaving school were compared with the occupations at the time of interview, some patterns seemed to emerge. There was a drift away from the labouring and sales/service categories to the clerical category. A number of the school leavers reported that they felt work in the clerical area was a more secure occupation and a better work environment.

With the importance of tourism to the NT's economy it was surprising to see the low numbers of school leavers who went on to further study or a traineeship in this area.

Apprenticeships were in keen demand. It was not uncommon for school leavers who took a job as a stopgap measure to state that they were waiting for an apprenticeship to become available. A lot of these people seemed to think that there were not enough apprenticeships available. Those who gained apprenticeships tended to stay with that apprenticeship. A number of these felt that they were privileged to have an apprenticeship. More students reported having left school to take up an apprenticeship/traineeship/course than for any other reason.

Education in the NT is a system that consumes a large percentage of government expenditure and involves many thousands of people. One of the great values of this study is that it is perhaps one of the best indicators available of how the ultimate 'products' of this system, the students, are adapting to life after school. If, for example, it was found that a much lower percentage of NT school leavers than the national average were entering higher education, it may have been that flaws existed in the system that needed to be identified and addressed. Conversely, if a higher percentage than the national average had entered this area, it may have been worth identifying, maintaining and even exporting the feature or features of the system that made this high percentage possible. As it was, the NT system performed well in this area.

The low numbers of school leavers, revealed by this study, who went on to study in the important (to the NT and Australia) area of tourism may have indicated that school leavers were not aware of the possibilities that exist in this area. That low numbers of females are entering certain key areas is another revelation of this report that could warrant further analysis and action aimed at allowing female school leavers improved access to all areas.

There is no doubt that information in this document would be of value to potential school leavers. Not only would this serve as a valuable insight into the school-to-work transition of the NT school leaver but would reinforce the value of staying at school to the end of Year 12 and the regret with which some recent school leavers viewed their decision to leave school early. For this reason senior school students would benefit from reading this document.

It is important that the experience of school leavers in all areas of the school to work transition is monitored to identify and address apparent successes and failures of this extensive, expensive and vital business of education.

APPENDIX 1

ASCO MAJOR AND MINOR GROUPS ADAPTED FOR THE 1989 SCHOOL LEAVERS SURVEY

J3 - PARA-PROFESSIONALS

- Medical and Science Technical Officers and Technicians
- Engineering and Building Associates and Technicians
- Air and Sea Transport Technical Workers
- Registered Nurses
- Police
- Miscellaneous Para-professionals

J5 - CLERKS

- Stenographers and Typists
- Data Processing and Business Machine Operators
- Numerical Clerks
- Filing, Sorting and Copying Clerks
- Material Recording and Dispatching Clerks
- Receptionists, Telephonists and Messengers
- Miscellaneous Clerks

J6 - SALESPERSONS AND PERSONAL SERVICE WORKERS

- Investment, Insurance and Real Estate Salespersons
- Sales Representatives
- Sales Assistants
- Tellers, Cashiers and Ticket Salespersons
- Miscellaneous Salespersons
- Personal Service Workers

J7 - PLANT AND MACHINE OPERATORS, AND DRIVERS

- Road and Rail Transport Drivers
- Mobile Plant Operators (Except Transport)
- Stationary Plant Operators
- Machine Operators

J8 - LABOURERS AND RELATED WORKERS

- Trades Assistants and Factory Hands
- Agricultural Labourers and Related Workers
- Cleaners
- Construction and Mining Labourers
- Miscellaneous Labourers and Related Workers